

Many Democrats Feel They'll Have to Implore Kennedy to Run

By R. W. APPLE Jr.
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 27—Once again, a sizable portion of the Democratic party is enacting a familiar scenario—waiting for Teddy.

Despite Senator Edward M. Kennedy's declaration last Sept. 23 that he would neither seek the Presidential nomination nor accept a draft, he remains a principal element in the developing scramble among the Democrats.

It is not that his party colleagues doubt his word; it is not that they expect him to become an active candidate. What has happened, instead, is that a surprising number of Democrats have come to the conclusion that they may be obliged in July of next year to go to the Massachusetts Senator, hat in hand, and implore him to carry their standard.

No matter how often Mr. Kennedy reiterates his intention to confine himself to seeking re-election to the Senate next year—and he does so several times a week—the true Kennedy believers, and other Democrats unimpressed by the current crop of active contenders, continue to speculate about a convention deadlock and a draft.

Others Have Troubles

As a result, the situation is in some respects back where it was before Mr. Kennedy made his announcement last fall. The active candidates, already stumbling, find it harder to attract key supporters and staff members because of the possibility that he could ultimately be persuaded to run.

"You remember those young lawyers who worked in '68 and '72?" asked one veteran of those campaigns the other day. "Well, they're going nowhere as long as they can indulge themselves in Teddy wish-fulfillment."

The list of those who believe, and who tell their friends, that Mr. Kennedy will be available if they are patient, is a long and distinguished one: Representative Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. of Massachusetts, the House majority leader; Edward Bennett Williams, the party treasurer, and so on, including many politicians at the state level as well.

So far as is known, all are speaking on the basis of their own assessments of the situation or their own hopes. None say that Mr. Kennedy or any of his intimates have given them even a private go-ahead signal.

Keeping the Kennedy talk alive is no great feat, given the nostalgia within the party for

his two assassinated brothers and the party's internal problems, which many Democrats consider Mr. Kennedy uniquely qualified to overcome.

Moreover, the polls keep thrusting the Senator into the picture. Last week, for example, a national survey by Louis Harris showed Mr. Kennedy

leading President Ford, 50 percent to 43—the only one of six active or potential Democratic candidates who did so.

The Senator himself has recently limited his politicking almost exclusively to Massachusetts, where he has been making weekly appearances despite some heckling and even jostling from opponents of mandatory busing. One exception was a trip to California, in which he met with party contributors, but only, his staff said, to raise money for Massachusetts.

When a draft-Kennedy committee sprang up last week, based in Lynn, Mass., the Senator disavowed it.

No Moves by Staff

Nor is his staff showing signs of an underground Presidential effort. Richard Drayne, his press secretary, is looking for a new job, and David Burke, his top political adviser in years past, has signed on for a long-term job with Governor Carey in Albany.

But the Kennedyites take these signs no more seriously than they took similar signs in 1968 and 1972.

In both of those years, Mr. Kennedy made it clear that he was not interested in the national ticket. But in 1968, word from Kennedy headquarters at Chicago's Standard Club was awaited until almost the last moment, and in 1972, word from the command post at Miami Beach's Tiger Bay Club was awaited again.

Both times, those who were sure the Senator would change his mind were proved wrong, and his closest confidants predict the same thing will happen this time. Said one: "He has done what he said he'd do in the past, but some of these people never learn."

Other Contenders

Among the draft proponents, the argument runs roughly as follows: Mr. Kennedy always asks for reports on the political situation when he sees old friends, which means he is interested. None of the current candidates can be nominated. A convention deadlock is likely, and the party in that situation

will turn to the Senator because he will be strong in the polls. And, in a short campaign, he will be able to minimize the negative impact of Chappaquiddick.

Some of the flaws in that scheme are obvious, such as the possibility that Senator Henry M. Jackson of Washington or Representative Morris K. Udall of Arizona or some other contender will assemble a convention majority, or that a deadlocked convention will turn to someone else, say Senator Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota.

But there is another flaw that has not been very widely noticed yet.

It relates to the election calendar in Massachusetts, which specifies that no candidate can withdraw from the Senatorial primary after July 9, three days before the Democratic National Convention is to open next year.

Mr. Kennedy is expected to draw an antibusing opponent in the Senate race, which would present him with a difficult choice.

He could not pull out before the convention, thus giving up his Senate seat, unless he was certain to be nominated for President, which is unlikely. But if he did not, he might find himself in the curious position of campaigning for the Senatorial nomination in Massachusetts through the Sept. 14 primary while already holding the Presidential nomination.

Backfire Feared

Some politicians think such an anomaly, particularly at a time when voters are demanding candor and political purity, might backfire against him nationally.

An escape from this situation would be a revision in the Massachusetts election law—presumably within the Senator's power—but Mr. Drayne said on Friday that "there is no way he would ever ask for that."

Nor, he said, would Mr. Kennedy ask for a special law similar to one passed in Texas at Lyndon B. Johnson's behest in 1960 permitting him to run for the Senate and for the Presidency in the same year, thus protecting his Senate seat in case of a Presidential loss.

It appears, therefore, that Mr. Kennedy, if drafted for President, would have to continue in the Massachusetts Senatorial primary for two months, until he could win the nomination there and step aside for a replacement to be named by the Democratic state committee.